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## SIN AND NEUROSIS -- UNIFYING THE INNER SPLIT

Greetings, my dearest friends. God bless everyone of you and your dear ones. Blessed is this hour.

The more you work on this path and comprehend the nature of this work, the more you will understand that the aim is to find your real self, your true being, underneath layers upon layers which, at first glance, seem to be your personality. The more you proceed, the more you realize that these layers are not your real self, but artificial traits you have cultivated for so long that they have become your second nature and therefore appear to be you.

When we think of the real self, we know that it stands for the divine spark. Your unconscious concept of the real self is so lofty and so holy that it is utterly foreign to the self with which you are familiar. The discrepancy both frightens and discourages you. Your fear is, in fact, one of the greatest stumbling blocks in finding your real self. The real self is actually much nearer to you than you realize. There are areas in your life where you do act out of your real self, but you do not know it, because it is such a natural process. You cannot, as yet, distinguish between the natural action and action coming from the superficial layers.

You assume that the real, divine self appears in the form of rigid perfection with a standardized pattern. This belief stands in your way more than your imperfections. Your misconception about divine perfection leads you to rigidity and compulsion on the one hand and to rebellion against it on the other. You ignore the vital truth that imperfection can lead to perfection and can be considered as such already in the present. For perfection in the real divine sense is relative and depends on one's attitude toward oneself and one's actions, rather than on perfect acts as such. In other words, it is never what you do that counts, but how you do it.

An act can be deemed right by the whole world and in accordance with all spiritual laws, and yet be dishonest. You may feel divided about it, may have committed it out of fear, compulsion or greed, to receive love and approval. Then it is not your real self that acts, regardless of how perfect the outer action may seem. On the other hand, your action may be condemned by the world. It may be contradictory to any notion of perfection. Yet in your present state, not only is it unavoidable, but is even necessary. You show yourself as you are, in accordance with your nature and your inner development. If you are at one with yourself about it, fully assuming responsibility, ready to pay the consequences, this imperfect act is more perfect, more according to your truth than external perfection. To understand this concept requires a certain amount of insight and progress. It certainly cannot be approached lightly and irresponsibly. Childish willfulness, always wanting to get something for nothing, should not be confused with this kind of perfect imperfection.

Now let us try to determine the difference between your genuine, true self and the superficial self. Whenever you act out of your real self, you are in complete unity with yourself. There is no doubt, no confusion, no anxiety, and no tension. You are not concerned with the appearance of your act in the eyes of others, or about principles or rules. You are concerned with the effect of your action on others and on yourself and with its consequences; and you choose this particular alternative because, even though you recognize its imperfections, it still seems better to you than another alternative. It corresponds to your innermost nature. This does not apply, of course, to destructive actions of a crass nature.

On this path you also learn to discriminate between what is really destructive and what is not. You completely overlook this angle because you are conditioned to accept ready-made rules. The rules standing in front of you block your view of the real issue. As long as you do not have the courage to examine the issues while forgetting the rule, you cannot come into selfhood, you cannot develop true self-confidence, which cannot be gained in any other way. For this procedure requires the courage to take the consequences upon yourself, to cut the bonds of dependency on rules and regulations, and thus on public approval. It takes courage to make a mistake, if necessary. It takes wisdom, because you know that the mistake itself is not so important, what counts rather is your attitude toward it.

Many of my friends have already discovered some aspects of this truth. They have begun to act and react according to it. For those of you who have not yet come across this vital insight -- that the mistake of the moment can be worth much more than following a "perfect" rule -- it is something to meditate upon.

The superficial self may perform an act which is right by all known standards. Yet you feel confused and anxious. The opposite course is clearly destructive, and although you may wish to follow it, you stop yourself because you do not wish to harm others. You are divided, which indicates that both alternatives come from the superficial self. This may also hold true when two alternatives, which seem neither particularly constructive nor destructive, leave you equally dissatisfied. In either case you are confused, because your real self is covered up and all alternatives at your disposal come from the outer layers.

Any way you turn, the alternative is always between your childish self-will and a rigid rule or principle. Incidentally, the principle may even be of your own making and not necessarily conform to public opinion. Both alternatives leave you utterly dissatisfied. You turn around in circles and cannot find the way out because you concentrate on the outcome and the physical act, believing one choice must be right and the other wrong, while you feel that both are wrong as far as your peace of mind is concerned. Each alternative would be dishonest in its own way: one because the greedy child within you wants to grab, the other because the child conforms and obeys, rather than acting out of conviction.

Whenever you are in crisis and confusion, you find yourself in just such a predicament. Your confusion is greater when you are not clearly aware of these issues. The first step is to clarify the problem as concisely as possible. Even before you can resolve the conflict, you will find relief because now, at least, you clearly see what the confusion is all about.

When I speak of actions, I do not mean only outer deeds. All thoughts, emotions, attitudes, inner decisions, and behavior patterns are actions. Actions coming from the outer self always put you in a trap. They offer no real solution. One alternative may seem outwardly right, but may feel wrong, or neither alternative may satisfy anyone. You feel helpless, and because you cannot cope with the issue, you hope for life to offer a solution. This helplessness and weakness points to the immature, distorted part of the personality. Wherever you are mature and whole, you are not dependent on outer circumstance. You can cope with the situation, and even though a certain course may be difficult, you are fully at peace with yourself.

It takes considerable progress in this work and understanding about certain conflicts and distortions before you can recognize the predicament of feeling helplessly trapped between the only two dissatisfying alternatives you can see, and then choosing one merely because it seems the lesser evil. That such a situation creates tension, anxiety, hostility, and discontent is only natural. To a degree, you may occasionally succeed in repressing these emotions, but only with the result that they will emerge in the most devastating way, when you least desire them. At that point you are no longer aware of the real reason why you feel so unhappy. Before you choose, you may go through stages of battling with yourself. You may try to find a solution by intellectual deliberations, which apply only to the outer situation. In this way, no matter how much wisdom and truth you hear and try to absorb from the outside, it does no good. Inwardly, something remains locked. You remain incapable of coming out of this confusion, this trap.

I discussed the topic of being caught between equally undesirable alternatives recently in a slightly different context. I also discussed the importance of what I called the point of relinquishing. Let us now apply both these topics to the freeing of the real self.

My dear friends, whenever you are helplessly trapped in a situation in which all available alternatives are dissatisfying, you are in such a predicament because your real self cannot manifest and guide you. The only way to free your real self sufficiently is to find your particular point of relinquishing that must be hidden somewhere right in the problem with which you are concerned. When you find the point of relinquishing, gradually two different alternatives will evolve: one will be to adhere to a rigid principle, be it general or personal; the other alternative will be to follow your real self. This new way may be imperfect at present, but is a venture you are willing to undertake with all that it takes.

Again, this point of relinquishing cannot be found by any intellectual process, but only indirectly, by self-search, and with further assistance. Suddenly the point of relinquishing will come into sight, clearly and strongly, or perhaps very subtly. Relinquishing may not require outer or material giving up, but rather letting go of an attitude of emotional grasping. Be aware that the peace, strength, and self-confidence deriving from selfhood can be attained only through finding the point of relinquishing.

Whenever you are trapped in the crisis of confusion and helplessness, you are bound to find that there is something to which you hold on too tightly, something you think you must have. It is a sign that a strong need is involved, be it real or false. When you reach the point of relinquishing, you will find that you do not sacrifice anything by giving up whatever it was you thought you could not live without, but are only giving up an illusion, a forcing current, a false need. Ultimately you have to recognize that it could not be wrenched from life through inner forcing anyway. You will

understand that by not relinquishing you are trapping yourself and making yourself weak, dependent, and helpless. Then, your true self cannot manifest. So far, the price you have paid for holding on where you should have relinquished is tremendous. You have forfeited peace, strength, and self-confidence, and made it impossible for you to pursue and fulfill a real need for the doubtful benefit of holding on to the illusion that you can receive something for nothing. The unconscious resistance to letting go is the strongest cause of self-contempt, guilt, weakness, unfulfillment, and many outer frictions and difficulties which are the final result of not relinquishing.

Once your inner work has brought you to this point, you can make an interesting experiment. Observe your past life from the point of view of relinquishing. Notice where you were confused and dependent and where you were free and at one with yourself. You may find that whenever in life your real self was manifest, you had relinquished something. Look perhaps first for positive examples; they might make it much easier for you to find the negative ones. From this perspective it should also be easier to give up your resistance to relinquishing, because your own experience will teach you that letting go is something utterly good and beneficial. This is reality. Illusion only breeds conflict. By finding where, through your natural development in this respect, your real self was manifest in the past, you will also see that it is not something far away and foreign. It is the familiar you in its very best sense.

I have been asked occasionally why the approach of these lectures has become more and more psychological, rather than spiritual. In addition to answers given before, I will add the following: The area of your personality in which you are conflicted and immature, in modern psychological terms "neurotic," is in essence what in religious or spiritual terms is called "sinful" or "evil." I explained to you why we avoided the crass term of "sin." Your self-destructive guilt feelings on the one hand, and your moralizing tendency and idealized self-image on the other, make of the terms "sin" and "evil" too much of an obstacle to facing the self. These tendencies in you made it necessary for me to keep fostering in you a spirit of self-acceptance, forgiveness, and tolerance with yourself.

There comes a time in your work, however, when it is necessary that you approach the afflicted areas in yourself without kid gloves, so to speak, and that you see yourself in stark reality without any dilution; without shying away from the full impact of what is there. Wherever your distortions, images, repressions, immaturities -- in short, your neuroses -- exist, there is also sin and evil, for neurosis always means a character defect. You have found, and are bound to see even more clearly, how distortions not only damage you and obstruct your own happiness, but are bound to affect others who are near you. The so-called neurosis always contains selfishness, greed, pride, cowardice, egocentricity, and ruthlessness in one form or another.

If you view your actions, reactions, and attitudes as emanating not from your true self, but from the afflicted area, and consider their effect on others, you will truly gain a new perspective and see that it is possible to accept and forgive yourself, while still knowing the intrinsic "sinfulness" within you. You will no longer be torn between the alternatives of either self-acceptance and self-indulgence, or repentance and self-hate. On one level of your being this is your dilemma. This, incidentally, is a typical example of one of those conflicts described before. You see two alternatives and neither is constructive. This conflict may not be conscious at all, but it accounts for much resistance. Inwardly, you are confused and fluctuate between these two alternatives. Again and again you hear that you should learn to accept, to forgive, and to like yourself, in spite of your

imperfections. But simultaneously you hear of the necessity of seeing yourself "realistically," so that your desire to change will grow. The desire to change can arise only out of true and genuine repentance. With strength and courage, you must, as a first step, accept the blindness, ignorance, and imperfection that still exist in you, realizing that all these are, in essence, character defects.

In your confusion, you see in each of the two alternatives a positive and a negative side, and therefore you cannot reconcile the two. You are afraid of forgiving yourself because you fear your craving for self-indulgence. You also fear to face fully that which is harmful to others, because you fear the whip of your self-hate.

Once you can truly perceive that this dilemma is an illusion and exists only because of your confusion, the two apparent opposites will become one whole, without any negativity. The two negatives will fall off. They have come into being through the split of a positive idea: self-forgiveness and fully facing one's "sin." Both derive from courage, humility, and the will to take on self-responsibility. Due to the split, these positive ideas have now a counterpart in self-indulgence and self-hate, both of which derive from cowardice, pride, lack of self-responsibility, and the will not to change yourself but to make the world change. Because of the split in yourself into both positive and negative trends, confusion sets in in the same pattern that the Fall brought about when the split of the original whole entity created confusion and darkness.

As long as you find yourself in such confusion, your true self cannot show you the clear way. You try tugging on both sides, leaving your energy scattered. You make up for this with a compulsive "I must do the right thing," which you then project on the world. You resent this demand and struggle against it. You defy the world, while still wanting to find your way. If your way should, by chance, appear similar to the world's demands, you are further hindered in your movement by your rebellion against the world. You have to prove that you do not bow down when, in reality, you would never do so anyway, whether or not your way was similar in manifestation to the world's.

The rebellion has a positive aspect too; one may call it healthy self-assertion. This healthy aspect suffers the same split as the concept of self-acceptance and the will to change. If you rebel against rigid principles, against perfectionism and against conformity, that is compatible with acceptance of the inevitable with humility, and with healthy interdependence. On the other hand, appeasement, obedience, and dependency derive from the same greed as childish rebellion and hostility. It is always the same: When a truth is split, incompatible aspects appear on the horizon, and create confusion.

The two examples I have given will show you how wrong the general concept is that a trend or quality in itself is either good or bad. This holds true only in a very crass and superficial area, and only to a limited degree. On the whole, it is not true. Each trend or quality, originally, before the split, was good and constructive. Qualities become destructive the moment one aspect of the trend is misused by the afflicted part of your soul. The distortion, in combination with the general misconceptions, increases the confusion.

The split also makes communication difficult because one person thinks of the constructive side of a trend, while the other has its negative and destructive side in mind. Take, for instance, rebellion, repentance, or self-acceptance. One person may think of healthy rebellion, or self-

assertion; of the strength and maturity in real repentance and change; of the humility and realism of accepting oneself as one is. Another thinks of the destructive kind of rebellion with its false strength, defiance, and cruelty; of the unhealthy guilt and self-accusation in false repentance; of the self-indulgence in self-acceptance. These are just examples, but you can find the same in any "good" or "bad" aspect or trait in existence. This confusion leads to misunderstandings among people, but most important of all, it leads to confusion and conflict within the self. Inner confusion and conflict makes it all the more difficult either to have the courage not to conform to fixed rules, or not to rebel against what is constructive, as well as what is actually wrong in this world. Indiscriminate rebellion can do nothing to change the world. To do that you first have to change yourself and overcome your inner split.

Every concept or quality contains such two-foldedness. Even an unquestionably divine quality like love, the most potent force in the universe, is often misunderstood and rejected because it is seen in its distorted form as false sacrifice, possessive domineering, greedy craving, and dependency.

Let us take another quality: charity. There are many aspects to it: the charity of the spirit, manifesting in tolerance and understanding; the charity of giving material things; the charity of feeling with and for another person, which is compassion. Let us consider compassion. As it happens, in the English language you actually have another term to designate the negative aspect of compassion, and that is pity. You do not have this distinction in all languages. However, for many other trends or qualities only one term exists, so that you are more apt to get confused. Even when two terms are available, it is still easy to be confused between them. Doesn't it often happen that a person actually feels pity while being convinced that what he or she feels is compassion? It is always tempting to pride oneself on having a positive attitude, thus covering up a negative one.

Why is pity destructive? Apart from the obvious answer which you all know perfectly well and which I do not have to discuss further, pity is destructive because it paralyzes you. In compassion, you are strong and capable of helping, of doing something for the other person. In pity, you can do nothing but weep for the other, while in reality you weep for yourself, due to your unwillingness to accept life and death and assume the responsibility which makes you capable of coping with life's hardships. In pity, you merely project your own weakness onto another, seeing in that person your own cowardice and hidden rebellion. Therefore it is an utterly selfish emotion.

The way to determine whether you feel compassion or pity is to notice whether the feeling gives you strength for the other person, or whether it weakens you. If it is the latter, you now know the procedure of looking beyond it. Where do you hold a misconception? Where are you trapped in confusion? What do you repress? Compassion makes you feel and understand, but it is strong enough not to paralyze your capacity to help, if need be -- even with a momentarily bitter medicine if that is for the good of the other person.

You will eventually come across other concepts which are confusing because they are split. If you become sufficiently aware, your confusions and conflicts will surface. Even before the confusion is cleared up, you will already feel a liberation, because you are then fully aware of the problem and willing to own it. At such times, I shall be happy to clarify the confused, split concepts the way I have tonight.

QUESTION: I always felt guilty because I didn't have real pity for my mother. I had compassion for her and because of that I was able to help her. If I had pitied her, it would have been impossible to help. But in spite of that, and in spite of knowing it, I feel guilty.

ANSWER: Your guilt, my dear, has nothing to do with pity or compassion. It has to do with your lack of a healthy approach to yourself, or toward your mother. It is an indirect outcome of other aspects within yourself.

QUESTION: I'm just about to lose my closest friend. And I would like to be able to get to the point of having compassion and losing any kind of pity.

ANSWER: The answer is implicit in this lecture. Find where you identify with this friend. What the friend experiences, you fear for yourself. The fear is repressed and therefore you can't deal with it and accept it. Thus, it manifests in pity.

QUESTION: It is more the loss that I feel than identification.

ANSWER: It is also identification. Losing a dear one is a pain that has to be borne. In itself, it is a healthy pain that cannot weaken the soul, provided you go through it. But the additional element in your pain is fear. And where fear is, identification occurs. The nature of these two pains is different, if you probe your emotions. The quality of the pain of loss does not contain the fear, bitterness, self-pity, struggle, and hardness contained in the pain of identification, in pity.

QUESTION: In the last lecture, with reference to the defense mechanism, you said that the basic defense is a general inner climate you can feel. Could you please explain what you mean by "inner climate"?

ANSWER: If you observe your emotions, which you increasingly learn to do on this path, you will detect the kind of feeling that can best be described as an inner stiffening. It may not always be on the surface. It can be provoked or caused, for instance, when you do this work with another person and certain areas in you are touched, or when you encounter criticism or disapproval. You will detect a hardening, a fearfulness, an apprehension, a desire to reject whatever it is that comes to you. You feel attacked and threatened. The feeling in you, coming as a reaction to the instances just mentioned, is your defense mechanism. Feeling it is a great step forward; you will come to see how this mechanism in you reacts and how such reaction is against your interest. You have to observe this inner climate, the stiffening and hardening, otherwise you cannot get further in this important respect of the work.

QUESTION: You didn't exactly define pity and compassion, as I remember, and I should like to know a little more about the difference between the two. It seems to me that, in the work you prescribe, the more we acknowledge and understand ourselves, the more we are able to act according to a rule, that is, to live together. Apart from that, the more we do in this work we become less human and more like machines. I believe the very core of humanity is pity, and indeed, self-pity, because if a person does not have self-pity, he is not selfish. If a person is not selfish, he is not human, he is a god. This is not a mental or intellectual consideration, but something I feel.

ANSWER: In the first place, I do not think it is necessary to repeat again the difference between compassion and pity. I have defined it sufficiently in the lecture. If you read it, you will not have any difficulty in understanding it. However, if the question still remains open, I shall be glad to answer it.

As to the rest of your question, it contains a number of confusions and misunderstandings, for instance, that at the core of every human being there is pity, indeed, self-pity. No, this is not true. Either pity or self-pity is the result, or the symptom, not even of the core, but of another symptom. Many attitudes and aspects in the human being are part of a chain-reaction. The core is the real self -- and this most certainly does not act according to any rule, either a general, outer one, or even a rigid self-made one. The nature of the core is flexibility and individuality.

Although it is human to be selfish, it is also human to be unselfish. Although it is human to have self-pity, it is also human not to have it. It is not that one is human and the other divine. Both are human. It is the same with selfishness as with any other trait. There is a healthy kind as well as an unhealthy, destructive kind. Your confusion here arises out of ignorance, in that you believe you are expected to give up any kind of selfishness. Therefore you rebel and cannot accept giving up even the kind of selfishness that is destructive of yourself and others.

Moreover, if you believe that the outcome of this work is first, to conform to a rule, and second, to become like a machine, I should like to say that you have not even understood the most basic rudimentary elements of this work. It is time for you, with your good intelligence, to understand it, at least in your brain. For the truth is the extreme opposite of what you stated here. It is significant, and it applies to every human being, regardless of intelligence, that wherever one is resistant to understand something, not only does one not hear the points one is unwilling to hear, but actually one often hears the very opposite. The essence of these teachings and the method of the work is to free you of ready-made rules and help you to become true individuals. In tonight's lecture this point was again stressed from a new angle.

You are under the misconception that goodness is dull and insipid, that it has no variation, no individuality, humor, pleasure, and wit. You ascribe all that to "badness." How wrong you are! Goodness is as diversified as badness. Only it has more humor, individuality, pleasure, because in health and maturity -- which amounts to the same as "goodness" -- you are better able to express yourself, you experience more keenly, and you have a deeper, wider scope for living. You confuse goodness with "goody-goodyness" which, if analyzed, is the extreme opposite of the former. In essence, goody-goodyness is another facet of the badness that seems so desirable to you.

In this lecture I mentioned, among other things, that it is sometimes better to make a mistake if it comes out of your real self than to obey rules and principles when you are not at one within yourself about them. Isn't it significant that you hear the very opposite? Doesn't that show something vitally important in your attitude toward yourself? Do you understand, my friend?

QUESTION: Yes, I understand your words. But, you see, what then becomes a rule is that I, or we, or mankind, must aim to become oneself. Then this is a rule.



ANSWER: No. You can choose to remain infants, if you so desire. You do not have to grow up. But if you wish to grow and live a constructive and full life and want to realize most of your potentials, then you must become yourself. But the choice has to be made by you.

QUESTION: I understand. Then there is a further question. Why then should such advanced people, shall we say people who have been on this path for some time, by doing this work, by realizing themselves, by throwing off fetters, become able to withstand what no human wants to withstand, such as another person's ill manners? Now, I do not think that is honest or the aim. This seems to me like being a machine.

ANSWER: There is another confusion here, my friend. The answer is very simple. Growth, maturity, unfoldment, makes you able to withstand, if you have to, that which you are incapable of changing. Maturity enables you to give up and let go of what you do not have to endure. This is something the immature person cannot do; the unbearable thus becomes a problem for him. You rebel against what you cannot change because it is outside your control. If you believe that your rebellion alleviates the difficulty, you are very much mistaken. Quite the contrary is true.

The mature person can take what has to be taken without being crushed. He or she will even benefit from it. This certainly does not make a machine out of anybody. It would be more appropriate to call the perpetually rebelling person a machine, and an ineffectual one at that, who constantly puffs aimless steam into the atmosphere. This depletes a person's strength, so that he or she becomes incapable of changing that which he could change, which is not beyond his control. He is unaware that he could do so, and even unwilling, because he cherishes the pseudo-individuality of the perpetual rebel. What makes you believe you are more of an individual and less of a machine when you constantly scream and fight where there is no reason to do so? What makes you believe that the person is a machine who faces an issue squarely, and upon discovering that here is something he cannot change, goes with the stream, thus saving his strength for the issues where he can make a change and thus make his life more meaningful?

Let me part from you with very special blessings, at this time of year, honoring the greatest Being who ever lived; the Being who had taught and lived and died by all the truth conveyed again and again in so many various ways, ever since your earth began to exist -- Jesus Christ. Be blessed in him; be in peace; and may your further path make you realize that his teachings, as well as any other teachings of truth, do not seek to make you conform, appease, bow down, and accept something against your will and conviction by changing you into puppets and goody-goodies. Quite the contrary! If you truly understand and follow his teachings, and certain aspects of his life, you will find this to be so. That he, as well as any other exponent of truth, has not only taught, but also lived it, is very opposite to what the rebellious person fears most -- the goody-goody conformer. Watch, observe yourself and others. Go deeper in this work. Look at the few people whom you may know who have already accomplished a part of this goal, and you will see that this is true: the more spiritually and emotionally developed a person is, the more he or she is alive, a distinct individual, and not a machine, divorced from warmth, courage, and humor. The true self of every individual is the very opposite of that which you fear and rebel against.

And so, my friends, be blessed in the Lord.

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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